



**St. Patrick's College**  
Lacken Cross, Killala - Co. Mayo

## **Draft Mobile Phone and Electronic Media Device Usage Policy**

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## **1. Background**

Increased technological advances have a major influence on our lives and no more so than in the area of mobile communications. Mobile phone usage along with the use of other digital devices has drastically increased among our school community over the past number of years. In recent times, an increased onus has been placed on students to use their mobile phones for the purposes of remote learning/distance learning.

This policy was drawn up in response to these technological advances and their effect on the day-to-day running of St Patrick's College. Lacken Cross.

### **1.1 Rationale**

St Patrick's College Lacken Cross recognises most students own a mobile phone/electronic device and have a right to possess it on their person during the school day. Mobile phones/ electronic devices can be of great benefit to students when used appropriately.

Some students may be too young or lack the emotional maturity to own a mobile phone device with access to the internet.

Nonetheless, this cannot compromise or disrupt teaching and learning. i.e., if they ring or are used during class time. There are potential dangers for the school community (pupils, parents, visitors, staff, coaches, teaching staff, management, trustees) stemming from the misuse and abuse of electronic media when/ if mobile phones are used in "cyber bullying," where students/ teachers are photographed against their will, where some recordings/ video recordings are made against the will of those featured etc. Mobile Phones/electronic devices can be a major distraction to students in the causing of isolation rather than the interaction and integration of students.

As a result, St Patrick's College will rigorously endeavour to protect the personal dignity and right to privacy of all the members of the school community.

Please note that, unless specifically directed to do so, students are not required to bring in personal devices to school. All students will continue to be able to utilize the school technology equipment for educational purposes.

It should be noted that urgent phone calls to or from a student will always be facilitated through the office.

## **1.2 Scope**

This policy applies to the whole school community – students, teachers, other staff, parents/guardians, and others insofar as measures under the policy relate to them.

## **1.3 Link to the School's Mission Statement**

This policy promotes the essence of our mission statement.

*'We believe we can make a difference by providing a quality education to our students in a caring and respectful environment'*

## **1.4 Relationship to Other School Policies**

This policy should be viewed in conjunction with the following school policies.

1. St Patrick's College Code of Positive Behaviour.
2. St Patrick's College Internet A.U.P.
3. St Patrick's College Anti-Bullying Policy.
4. St Patrick's College Data Protection Policy.

These policies can be found on the school's website [www.lackencross.ie](http://www.lackencross.ie)

## **1.5 Objectives of the Policy**

1. To optimise teaching and learning situations for our students.
2. To reduce the possible distractions to/for our students.
3. To provide an environment free from threat or invasion of privacy.
4. To discourage the potential of cyber bullying among students.
5. To encourage interaction among our students outside of class.
6. To encourage the use of a mobile phone as an educational tool in the classroom.

## **2. Procedure**

### **2.1. Mobile Phones on the School Grounds**

St Patrick's College recommends that phones and other digital devices are not brought to school unless advance notice is given by teachers to students that a device may be needed for class.

Mobile devices must be charged prior to bringing them to school in order to be usable during school hours. Charging devices in the school is not permitted in classrooms and will be considered a breach of this policy.

As such, the school will accept no responsibility for replacing mobile phones that are lost, stolen or damaged in school.

## **2.2. Mobile Phones in the Classroom**

St Patrick's College accepts that mobile phones may be used in the classroom for the following purposes, with teacher permission and supervision.

- To take photographs of project work for state examinations or for Classroom Based Assessments (C.B.A.)
- To participate in revision-based activities using specific apps such as Kahoot, Use of Coding apps, Duolingo, Wordle or Mentimeter.
- Note taking. If a student is slow in taking notes from the board or projector, they can use their phone to take a picture of the notes they didn't catch, so as not to miss anything.
- Stopwatch/timer: classes, exercises and presentations often come with time limits. Practice their time management by using their mobile phone's stopwatch
- Share Notes: many teachers tend to distribute material at the beginning or at the end of the class through OneNote. Instead of photocopying large amounts of paper and handing them out, students' mobile phones allow them to easily access this information

When a student brings a mobile phone/digital device to school, the phone must be switched off and may only be used for educational purposes on the school premises or grounds.

Students should leave their mobile phones on the teacher's desk or in a designated mobile phone storage box when they enter a classroom.

A student may not keep their phone on their person or in their school bag.

Phones must never be brought to examinations and may only be brought to class under the teacher's instruction.

For this policy to work successfully, good will and trust are essential.

However, students who continue to be in contravention of this rule shall be asked to firstly turn off their mobile device and secondly hand up their phone and SIM card to the teacher.

Phones will be kept in the office until the end of the school day where they can be collected by the student and/or their parent or guardian.

### **2.3. Mobile Phones during Breaks**

Use of personal devices is not permitted between classes, during morning break or during lunch while on school property.

### **2.4. Mobile Phones in Out of School Activities**

Students travelling away from school on an organised school activity may be permitted to use their phone in certain circumstances.

On such occasions, where a teacher permits phone usage, students and parents/guardians will be made aware of it in advance of travel in writing along with the permission letter for that event.

Unless this notification is received, parents/guardians and students must adhere to the usual phone and digital devices policy as outlined in this document.

School Trips/Sporting Events - Students are **not allowed** to use their mobile phones while going to and returning from school trips and sporting events except in the following circumstances.

1. To call their parents/guardians.
2. Any other activity, e.g., listening to music, gaming, must receive explicit permission from the teacher/coach.
3. Students are not allowed to 'hotspot' other students or share devices while on school trips, outings, or events.

Students participating in school-related activities (e.g., Study, Extra-Curricular Activities, School Trips, Tours etc.) must abide by the mobile phone rules governing these activities.

## **2.5. Student Contact with Home**

In order to assist the school in implementing this policy, parents/guardians are asked not to arrange to contact students by mobile at any time during the school day.

Contact with the school must be made through the office on 096 34177 and students are directed to use the office telephone if needed.

If a student is unwell or needs to contact home, they must follow the recognised school procedures through their Year Head and the front office and not by mobile phone.

A student who wishes to go home for any reason during the school day must arrange to do so through the school office and not independently by mobile phone.

This ensures that correct procedures for leaving school before the end of classes for that day are observed.

Responsibility cannot be taken by the school authorities for students who arrange independently to go home without following proper procedure.

Any such arrangement is a breach of the Code of Behaviour for Students and will incur sanctions.

Students are not permitted to call, text message, email, or electronically communicate with others from their personal device, including other students, parents, guardians, friends, and family during the school day unless instructed to do so by the Teacher.

## **3. Other Issues with Mobile Phones**

### **3.1. Mobile Phones and Bullying**

Incidents where students use mobile phones to bully other members of the school community will be treated as serious breaches of discipline and dealt with in accordance with the school's Code of Positive Behaviour and Anti-Bullying Policies.

It should be noted that it is a criminal offence to use a mobile phone to menace, harass or offend another person. As such, the school may consider it appropriate to involve the Gardaí and Túsla in such incidents.

### **3.2. Lost or Stolen Mobile Phones**

The school accepts no responsibility for replacing lost, stolen, or damaged phones. The safety and security of mobile phones is a matter for students/parents.

It is strongly advised that students mark their mobile phones with their names and use passwords to ensure that unauthorised phone calls or texts cannot be made on their phones.

It is strongly advised that pupils use passwords/pin numbers to ensure that unauthorised phone calls cannot be made on their phones (e.g., by other pupils, or if stolen). Pupils must keep their password/pin numbers confidential. Mobile phones and/or passwords should never be shared.

All students will be instructed to hand up mobile phones before sitting State examinations/In house school exams.

Failure to do so will be considered a serious breach of school rules.

### **3.3. School Wi-Fi and Internet**

In recent times, an onus has been placed on students to use their mobile phones for the purposes of remote learning/distance learning. To assist with using these technologies, teachers may initially ask students to download the Microsoft suite of apps onto their personal device (phone) and teach their class how these apps will be used for educational purposes – notetaking, homework, presentations etc.

While students might feel the need to bring a mobile device to school for educational purposes, there is no need. The school has an ample supply of laptops and a computer room which students can use for these purposes and teachers can book and use these facilities when required.

St Patrick's College recognises that in certain instances students may need to use their mobile phones in class and allows students to access wi-fi in the school under the students wi-fi access code.

Students may only use the school wireless network and content filtered broadband. Use of other 'unfiltered' public wireless connections, such as mobile networks, is not allowed during school hours. Personal devices used in school are not permitted to connect to the Internet through 3G, 4G, or other content service providers. Devices used in school must access the



Internet via the school's content filtered wireless network and without the use of VPN's or proxy servers.

The school reserves the right to change the Acceptable Use Policy (AUP) in line with overall school policy.

However, St Patrick's College, Lacken Cross has the right to protect its network and technical resources and any student who brings their own device to school is required to adhere to the schools Internet A.U.P., the school's Code of Positive Behavior and the school's Anti-Bullying Policy.

### **3.4. Recording and Taking Pictures in School**

Students may not use the devices to record, transmit or post photos or videos of any member of the school community. Nor can any images, audio and/or video recorded at school be transmitted or posted online at any time without being reviewed by and with the permission of the administrator (principal) at the school.

No photographs can be taken, or recordings made while on school premises and during school-related activities unless permission is first sought and given by the school principal.

Students who do so will be in serious breach of school rules as well as G.D.P.R. rules.

Using mobile phones/digital devices in such a way without permission can seriously infringe on people's rights.

Incidents where students use mobile phones/digital devices to bully other students or send offensive messages or calls will be investigated under the St Patrick's College Anti-Bullying Policy.

It should be noted that it is a criminal offence to use a mobile phone/digital device to menace, harass or offend another person.

**As such, the school may consider it appropriate to involve the Gardaí and Túsla in such incidents.**

### **3.5. Educational Programmes**

St Patrick's College shall provide various educational programmes for its students through S.P.H.E. class and parents through guest speakers and information on the school's website.

St Patrick's College strongly advises parents and guardians that they should educate themselves about the apps on their child's mobile phone, in particular, instant messaging apps such as Snapchat, Instagram, TikTok, Telegram etc.

Some of these apps have inbuilt 'self-destructive mechanisms' which allow for messages to be deleted automatically after a set period and although these apps can have a fun side, they also have a darker side and can be used for negative purposes.

St Patrick's College will also organise specific events such as a 'Digital Free Day.'

## **4. Sanctions**

### **Stage One – First Instance**

1. The teacher shall ask the student to hand up their device and write a note in the student's journal which must be signed by parents or guardians for the next day.
2. The teacher shall complete the Mobile Phone Incident Book in the school office.
3. The student can collect their mobile device at the end of the school day.
4. If the teacher's note is not signed the next day, the student will be asked to hand up their device again, and the student will move on to stage two of sanctions.

## **Stage Two – Second Instance**

1. The teacher shall ask the student to hand up their device and write a note in the student's journal which must be signed by parents or guardians for the next day.
2. The teacher shall inform the Year Head who will contact the student's parents to explain the implications of the sanction.
3. The Year Head shall complete the Mobile Phone Incident Book in the school office.
4. The student can collect their device at the end of the day.
5. If the teacher's note is not signed the next day, the student will be asked to hand up their device again, and the student will move on to stage three of sanctions.

## **Stage Three – Third Instance**

1. The teacher shall ask the student to hand up their device and write a note in the student's journal which must be signed by parents/guardians.
2. The teacher shall inform the Deputy Principal or the Principal who will contact the student's parents to explain the implications of the sanction.
3. The student will be allowed to collect their phone at the end of the day but will not be allowed to bring their phone to school for a set period or the end of term.

If a student fails to hand up their mobile phone to a teacher after being requested to do so, it will be regarded as a serious breach of the school's code of conduct.

## **5. Responsibilities**

### **Role of the Principal/Deputy Principal**

1. Implement the school's mobile phone and electronic media device policy.
2. Meet with students to explain and reinforce the policy as appropriate.
3. Meet with parents/guardians where necessary.

### **Role of Year Head**

1. Implement the school's mobile phone and electronic media device policy.

2. Meet with students to explain and reinforce the policy as appropriate.
3. Contact parents/guardians

### **Role of the Teacher**

1. Teachers should apply the mobile phone policy in their classrooms.
2. Teachers should apply the mobile phone policy while on school trips and outings.
3. Teachers should remind/teach students about the school's Mobile Phone A.U.P.

### **Role of the Parent or Guardian**

1. Parents should sign the school's Mobile Phone A.U.P. and agree to follow the rules set out in the policy.
2. Parents should support the school's procedures for contacting their child in the event of an emergency or illness.
3. Parents should talk to their children and teach about good mobile phone etiquette and habits and guide them to become good digital citizens.

### **Role of the Student**

1. Students should sign the school's Mobile Phone AUP and agree to follow the rules set out in the policy.
2. Students should comply with teachers' instructions regarding the use of devices during school hours, and in classes.

### **6. Evaluation**

This policy is monitored on an ongoing basis and amendments added as new technology develops and becomes accessible.

**However, any member of the school community is entitled to request a review of the policy at any time.**

### **7. Declaration**

This policy was formed following with all staff, Members of the Board of Management, Parents and Students Council. It is recommended that this policy be reviewed every three years or whenever it is deemed necessary by school management. The Board of Management of St Patricks' College adopted it on:

## 8. Appendices

### Appendix 1

#### **Agreement Form**

As a student I understand and will abide by this Mobile Phone Acceptable Use Policy (AUP). I understand that any violation of this AUP may result in not being able to use my mobile device in school and could mean other disciplinary action.

Student Name: \_\_\_\_\_ (in capitals)

Student signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

As Parent/Guardian I understand that my child accepts the responsibilities outlined in the Mobile Phone AUP.

I have discussed the AUP with them and we both understand our own responsibilities.

Parent/Guardian Name: \_\_\_\_\_ (in capitals)

Parent/Guardian signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ (please return)

Appendix 2 – Record Keeping Book Page

<b>First Time</b>	<b>Teacher</b>	<b>Note in Journal</b>	<b>Notes</b>
<b>Second Time</b>	<b>Teacher</b>	<b>Phone Call Home Year Head</b>	
<b>Third Time</b>	<b>Teacher</b>	<b>Phone Call Home P/DP</b>	